

Father Figure: Joseph Smith III and the Creation of the Reorganized Church, by Roger D. Launius. Administrative Biography Series. Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1990. 215 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$17.50 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT FLANDERS, SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

Joseph Smith III was very different from his father, Joseph Smith, the prophet-founder of Mormonism. For one thing, the father died at age 39 in a hail of lynch mob bullets. The son lived to be 83, and departed this earth peacefully, mourned by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, whose prophet-president, shaper, and builder he had been for fifty-five years, from 1860 until his death in 1915. He was succeeded in that office by three of his sons, the last of whom was a child of his old age. A grandson occupies the post at present, and may well carry the Smith direct-lineage leadership into the twenty-first century.

It is more than a coincidence of events. The Smith lineage doctrine has been a distinguishing characteristic of the Reorganized Church from its beginning in 1852. It is the one thing that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, know about the Reorganized Church. "Josephites" is a kind of Mormon folk-term for Reorganites, an ironic honor for Joseph III.

Father Figure describes how "Brother Joseph" sought to preserve a following of those early Mormons who rejected Brigham Young, and fashion it into a separate denomination. Consciously and emphatically rejecting the name "Mormon," they were a kind of eclectic mixture of religious elements, including Mormon, evangelical Protestant, revivalist, and social gospel. Smith permanently stamped that volatile combination with his personality as well as his skill, as Roger Launius shows in this highly specialized administrative biography.

Launius is a professional public historian who has written extensively on Reorganized Church history, including a prize-winning biography of Joseph Smith III. *Father Figure* is a derivative work written to be the second volume in an RLDS Administrative Biography series (the first deals with the administration of Frederick Madison Smith, Joseph III's first successor) issued by Herald House, the church's publishing arm. It is intended primarily for a church audience, and will be of little use to those lacking extensive prior knowledge of early Mormon history and the RLDS doctrinal concerns growing out of that history. Church members will find it illuminating because it treats their religious folk traditions categorically and analytically. The nine chapters are independent topical essays and do not

possess the narrative quality commonly associated with biography. "Non-members" (the term Reorganites have long used for everyone else) may discern in *Father Figure* clues to the inner past of their RLDS neighbors; but in general they will find it to be an interior story, the plot of which is obscure. For example, the residence of Joseph Smith III and the *True Latter Day Saints Herald* in Lamoni, Iowa, for some twenty years, and the existence of sizable enclaves of the Saints at Lamoni, Council Bluffs, Des Moines, and other Iowa sites are matters of minor concern to this book. (In 1902 Smith removed with the press to Independence, Missouri, which his father had designated in 1831 as "the gathering place.")

Father Figure is both institutional and intellectual history, at once synthetic and original. Like most of the work of the New Mormon History of which it is a part, it seeks a middle ground of tone and style that will avoid offending faithful readers at the same time that it provides them new information and interpretations. It comprehends much of the work of recent historians of Mormonism. Indeed, its bibliography is a useful compendium, particularly of writing on the important Succession Question in Mormon history. Launius has made a significant contribution to the emergent understanding of the Reorganized Church with this volume about the administration of its most influential leader.

Cowtown Lawyers: Dodge City and Its Attorneys, 1876-1886, by C. Robert Haywood. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. xiv, 289 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE H. LARSEN, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

In fact and fiction, Dodge City, Kansas, is a name associated around the world as the quintessential cattle town. It instantaneously evokes images of the very real Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp, along with those of the mythical Matt, Kitty, Chester, and Doc of "Gunsmoke" fame. Yet the frontier period of the self-styled "Beautiful, Bibulous Babylon of the Frontier" lasted only ten years, from 1876 to 1886. Afterwards, Dodge City evolved into a successful commercial and transportation center of moderate size (present population around twenty thousand) for the bleak central plains of the western United States. C. Robert Haywood, in his new book, *Cowtown Lawyers*, analyzes the development of the colorful community in its frontier days, from its inception as a military base and buffalo hide shipping center,

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